

“What Would Jesus Say to us About Our Relationship with Native Americans”

Theme: What Would Jesus Say...

Scripture: Mark 5:21-34 (FNV)

Guest Speaker: Will Krischke

Meditation Moments for Monday, May 6 – Read Genesis 1-2. I was always taught that mankind was created on the sixth day, because God saved the best for last, and that mankind was the pinnacle of God’s creation. When I studied this passage with a group of Native students, one of them pointed out to me that there is another way to understand it — man is the last born in the family of creation, the youngest sibling. As the youngest in the family, mankind would be wise to treat our older brothers and sisters with respect and understand that we have a lot to learn from them.

Reflection: How would the way you think about creation (the sun and skies, the mountains and rivers, the birds and wildlife) be different if you saw them as your older brothers and sisters in the family of God’s creation?

Prayer: *Creator Father, help us to see Brother Sun and Sister Moon as elder siblings. Help us to treat them with respect, and give us eyes to see and ears to hear the things they have to teach us about You, and about the world we live in.*

Tuesday, May 7 – Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13, John 13:1-17. Often when I share that my Native friends have challenged me to see humanity as the youngest siblings in the family of creation, they point out that mankind is supposed to rule over creation (Genesis 1:26.) This is true, but God’s idea of dominion is pretty different from ours. Jesus demonstrated holy dominion by washing his disciple’s feet – and told them they should do the same. Also, God has a habit of raising up the lowly and last born, and the least likely into places of power and authority, as we see in the story of David (this happens over and over in scripture – Joseph, Gideon, etc.)

Reflection: We often interpret Genesis 1:26 to mean that creation is a resource at our disposal, and good stewardship means making it as useful to ourselves as possible. Personally, I would not want a leader or king who treated me as a resource at his disposal. What might it look like for us to follow the example of Christ, and exercise our God-given authority by “washing the feet” of Creation?

Prayer: *Lord of all Creation, teach us how to exercise authority, to lead and to have dominion in the ways that You do. Grow our hearts in love for all of Creation and show us how to see humble service as the act of a holy leader.*

Wednesday, May 8 – Read Daniel 9:4-19. Often when we speak to non-Native groups about the need for confession and repentance from sins committed against Native Americans before we can talk about reconciliation, people say things like, “Those things happened a long time ago.” “I’m not racist.” “I’ve never done anything to Native American people.” “I’m not responsible for things my ancestors did before I was born, am I?”

The book of Daniel is a book about a righteous man. Daniel has lived a righteous and faithful life, steadfastly remaining faithful to God in incredibly difficult circumstances. And yet, when Daniel prays for his people, he does not distance himself from the sins they have committed. Notice how many times Daniel uses the word “we” in this prayer, confessing sins that he, personally, never committed.

Reflection: What would it look like for us to follow Daniel’s example, and take responsibility before God for the sins of our people? How would it change our relationships with Native people if we thought about our people the way that Daniel thinks about them?

Prayer: *Gracious and loving God, teach us to pray as Daniel prays. Lead us to a place where we can confess and repent on behalf of our ancestors, that we might see healing and reconciliation in our land.*

Thursday, May 9 – Read Acts 2:1-13. At the very moment that the church was born, God miraculously enabled the disciples to speak the heart languages of the people. What makes this even more amazing, to me, is that it probably wasn't necessary for communication. Greek was the language of the Roman Empire, and almost everyone who traveled or conducted business spoke Greek – meaning nearly everyone who was in Jerusalem that day. We know that at least a few of the disciples spoke Greek (John, for instance, wrote his gospel in Greek.)

Reflection: Why do you think God chose to gift the disciples with such a variety of heart languages, instead of just encouraging them to speak the language of empire? What does this miracle communicate to us about how God feels about diversity and ethnicity? What would it look like for the people of God to celebrate diversity instead of encouraging that everyone learn to speak, act, think in one uniform way?

Prayer: *Creator in heaven, you made the earth such a wild and diverse place, full of all kinds of variety and creativity. No two mountains are the same, no two people are the same, and no two cultures are the same. Please calm our fears when we feel overwhelmed and inadequate in the presence of your stunning creativity and complexity and teach us to love the differences in the same way that You do.*

Friday, May 10 – Read Acts 17:16-34. When Paul visits Athens, his first reaction is negative – he sees a city full of idols. After a frustrating day of evangelism that results in his listeners calling him a “babbling,” he decides to change his approach. The next time he is invited to speak, he focuses on what is positive in the Athenian culture. This time, he is able to preach the same Gospel in a way that affirms their cultural identity, and their response is very different – some become believers, and others are curious enough that they invite him to come speak to them again.

Reflection: How did you first hear the Gospel of Jesus? Was it as a “foreign” religion, or was it in a way that connected with you and your life? What do you think it would mean to preach the Gospel in a way that connects with the cultural values and lives of Native American people? How might the same message be presented differently to them, so that they can receive it as good news?

Prayer: *Jesus, you left the glory of heaven for the mud of earth so that we might understand the message of God's love and grace for us. Help us to meet people where they are, to speak their heart language and affirm the beautiful things in their lives and worldview, so that they might receive the good news of the Gospel.*

Saturday, May 11 – Read Revelation 7:9-12. In the end, every single ethnicity is present in the family of God. Every tribe, tongue, and nation. Navajos and Wyandottes, Germans and Hutus, Koreans and Maoris. None are left out; none are left behind. This vision of the throne room of God is a vision of unity in diversity; all are united in their worship of the Lamb, and yet they do not lose their distinctiveness. It is a beautiful vision, and one that should inspire us.

Reflection: We are headed toward a promised future of unity in diversity, but in the present day, we seem to love assimilation and uniformity (I'm afraid a gathering of every tribe, tongue and nation would be a pretty uncomfortable place for many of us.) What can we do, as the people of God, to prepare ourselves to embrace this vision of heaven? What steps can we take now so that our churches and communities of worship more fully reflect this glorious and beautiful vision of God's Kingdom?

Prayer: *Jesus, you are the Lamb who was slain to take away our sins, and we long to spend eternity with you. Prepare us for your kingdom; teach us to love what you love, to celebrate what you celebrate, that when the final banquet is laid before us, we are able to partake with joy. Amen.*